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FOR EUR/NB - KATHERINE GARRY

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [NATO](#) [GG](#) [RS](#) [EN](#)
SUBJECT: ESTONIA ON ALLIANCE ATTITUDES TOWARD NAC VISIT TO
GEORGIA

REF: STATE 125337

Classified By: DCM Karen Decker for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

¶1. (C) On September 11, poloffs delivered reftel points to Arti Hilpus, MFA Director for Security Policy, and Toomas Lukk, MFA Director for Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Hilpus and Lukk emphasized strong Government of Estonia (GOE) support for the proposed North Atlantic Council (NAC) visit to Georgia but stated that the opinions of important Alliance members, like Germany and France, would carry significant weight. Hilpus told us that Germany has been openly skeptical about the utility of the visit, viewing it as "an unnecessary disruption to Russian interests," while France is "suspicious" and is uncertain the visit is necessary at all. Lukk commented that German opposition to the NAC visit reaches all the way to Foreign Minister Steinmeier. NOTE: Post now understands a NAC visit to Georgia has failed to garner enough support in Brussels and is unlikely to occur in the near term. END NOTE.

¶2. (C) Lukk commented that the international community has not properly responded to the missile incident in Georgia and that it is "crunch time" for the EU and NATO to clearly show their support. From its own experience in dealing with Russia, Lukk said that Estonia understands the crisis Georgia faces as Russia continues to test the limits of Georgian sovereignty. Therefore, Estonia will continue to press the international community to keep Georgia on its agenda. As an aside, Lukk noted that it was very likely Russia would try to block the OSCE from issuing a statement in support of Georgia as it had done in the UN Security Council. Consequently, the GOE believes that it is up to NATO and the EU to counter Moscow's opposition.

¶3. (C) Both Hilpus and Lukk said that the standoff between Georgia and Russia must be framed in the larger context of Georgia's aspirations to join NATO and the EU. In Lukk's opinion, this crisis with Russia is just the latest manifestation of Moscow's efforts to discourage Georgia's aspirations to join NATO. At the same time, the current temperature among NATO allies regarding extending NATO's Membership Action Plan to Georgia is "not as high as expected or hoped." According to Hilpus, Europe is split along the usual lines of "old" and "new" members: countries like France, Germany, Belgium, etc. versus the newer members from Eastern Europe. However, Lukk said, Estonia's position is short and clear: it is "time to say yes to Georgia."
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